

DECISION RECORD
for the Young Stand Management and Fuels Reduction
Treatments within the Grave Creek Watershed
Environmental Assessment

EA # OR118-03-004

Decision

It is my decision to implement Alternative 3 and the Project Design Features proposed in the Young Stand Management and Fuels Reduction Treatments within the Grave Creek Watershed Environmental Assessment (EA # OR118-03-004).

The project area is located east and west of Interstate 5 and extends a few miles north of Wolf Creek and south of Sunny Valley within Douglas and Josephine counties. Lands within the Planning Area are intermingled blocks of public and private lands; however, my decisions apply only to BLM-administered lands. The units described under the environmental assessment will be treated beginning FY2004 and will continue through 2012, as funding permits.

Management activities will include a combination of vegetation treatments, mechanical treatment of slash, hand piling, and burning will include riparian reserves, but will not be done within designated no treatment zones (NTZ), as specified in the EA (p. 9-25 & A-1). Vegetation treatments will consist primarily of maintenance/release brushing, pre-commercial thinning, and non-commercial density management. Thinning of stands may be marginally commercial. The upper diameter cutting limit for all conifers and hardwoods will be 7 inches diameter at breast height (DBH). Approximately 1,500 acres will receive a maintenance or release brushing treatment. Approximately 1,500 acres will receive a pre-commercial thinning / release treatment. Approximately 2,000 acres will be pruned. Some units will receive multiple treatments such as a unit that will be pre-commercially thinned followed by a pruning. Selected units will be re-treated as brush and hardwood species re-sprout. Pruning of selected leave conifers and hardwoods on Matrix and within Riparian Reserves will be done to meet wood quality, species composition, wildlife habitat diversity, and fuels management objectives. Pruning of young sugar pine will be done to aid in the establishment and maintenance of sugar pine within the project area. Approximately 3,300 acres will be treated to produce desired stand conditions and allow stands to develop in a way that they could meet land use allocation objectives.

Approximately 5,700 acres will be treated to reduce hazardous fuel loading and the potential for major wildfires. Of these acres identified for fuels treatments, approximately 1,900 acres will receive manual treatments (slashing, hand piling, hand pile burning). Mechanical treatments will be applied to approximately 300 acres. The remaining 3,500 acres will be underburned or broadcast burned to reduce fuel loadings. These acres will include units that were previously harvested under commercial timber sales. All 5,700

acres are included for future treatments to maintain desired fuel loadings and the reduction of encroaching ladder fuels. Future fuels maintenance treatments will include underburning as well as additional handpiling and burning of piles, as described in the EA (Table A-4). Treatments will include manual and mechanical methods in combination with prescribed burning. In addition to units treated to reduce fuel loadings, an estimated twenty five percent of the acres that were treated for silvicultural reasons will receive treatments to reduce activity fuels.

The amount of vegetation treatment, fuel hazard reduction, and other work accomplished would be dependent on available funding. The majority of the proposed work is projected to occur within fiscal years 2004 through 2009. Initial fuel hazard reduction work is projected to be completed by fiscal year 2010. Follow-up maintenance fuel treatments would occur through 2012. Due to the implementation timeframe of this project (2004-2012), stand conditions within units would be reassessed for changes and applicability of proposed treatment prior to work being done. If the effects of treatments are different than what was analyzed within this EA, a separate environmental analysis would be completed to determine effects. Management guidelines current at the time of treatment will be applied.

Three wetland restoration/enhancement projects and one meadow restoration project will be implemented, as described in the EA (Table A-6).

Merchantable woody material (up to 7 inches in DBH) may be removed to roads by cable yarding, tractor winching with later hauling, monocable, log chutes, hand removal. A total of 924 acres will provide small diameter merchantable woody material.

The project design features define no treatment zones (NTZ) as a 25 ft slope distance retained along fish-bearing streams, permanently flowing non-fish-bearing, seasonally flowing or intermittent streams. These no treatment zones would extend from the edge of the riparian vegetation or, if no riparian vegetation exists, from the edge of the stream channel.

Survey and Manage Bureau Sensitive vascular species have been found in the following units : cc-27-1; cc-27-4; cc- 28-2; p-34-2; p-9-1; p-11-1; & p-20-1. A no-cut buffer of approximately 100 feet will be applied around these sites.

Known red tree vole sites, as identified by the BLM, will be protected by pulling burn piles away from the drip line of active nest trees and thereby directing smoke and heat away from tree crowns. Underburns would have a control line around active nest trees to direct smoke and heat away from tree crowns.

The recommended noxious weed monitoring efforts described in Chapter 4 of this EA will be implemented.

Rationale

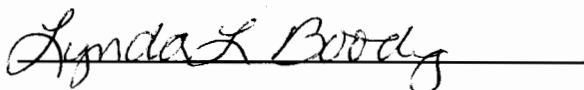
The decision to implement this proposal meets the purpose and need identified in the EA and furthers the intent established in the Northwest Forest Plan and the Medford District Resource Management Plan (RMP) to reduce tree mortality and restore the vigor, resiliency, and stability of forest stands that are necessary to meet the land use allocation objectives.

Release, pre-commercial thinning, and pruning treatments are needed to accelerate growth, control stand density, influence species composition and dominance, and place stands on developmental paths so that desired stand characteristics result in the future. Treatments to restore plant communities (such as those to restore wetlands and meadows) are needed to promote native plant species and to control invasive species. Forest development treatments within young stands and treatments to restore plant communities are needed so that management direction as planned for in the Northwest Forest Plan (USDA/USDI 1994, p. B-5 – B-9 & B-31) and Resource Management Plan (USDI, p. 39-40, 46-49, 56, 62, 73, Appendix E) can occur and that land use allocation objectives to be achieved.

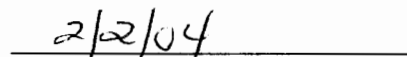
There were 3 letters from the public, regarding the Young Stand Management and Fuels Reduction Treatments within the Grave Creek Watershed Environmental Assessment. The EA tiers to these higher level plans. I reviewed the public comments before coming to this decision. The letters support this project to thin young stands with the Grave Creek watershed. It should be noted that the intent of this environmental assessment (under the National Environmental policy Act CEQ regulation 1508.28) is to determine if there are significant impacts and whether these impacts have already been analyzed in the Medford Resource Management Plan and Northwest Forest Plan.

I am confident that the EA represents a thorough analysis of the site-specific impacts to affected habitats and species, in light of the more comprehensive analysis done in the Medford RMP and Northwest Forest Plan to which the EA is tiered. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) calls for concise and focused descriptions of the proposals and their effects; not all background information is required to be part of the NEPA document.

In accordance with the BLM Forest Management Regulations (43 CFR 5003.2(a) & 5003.3 (a)), the decision for this project will not become effective, or be open to formal protest, until a notice of decision appears in a newspaper of general circulation in the area where the lands affected by the decision are located.



Lynda L. Boody
Field Manager, Glendale Resource Area
Medford District, Bureau of Land Management



Date

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)
for the Young Stand Management and Fuels Reduction
Treatments within the Grave Creek Watershed
EA # OR118-03-004**

The proposed actions for the Young Stand Management and Fuels Reduction Treatments within the Grave Creek Watershed are described in the environmental assessment (EA) and can be obtained at the Medford District or on the Medford BLM internet site: <http://www.or.blm.gov/Medford>

The proposed action is located in: T32S, R4W, Sec. 34, 35
T33S, R4W, Sec. 3, 9, 11, 15, 17, 21, 27, 29, 30, 31, 33
T34S, R4W, Sec. 7
T33S, R5W, Sec. 1, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 17, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27, 28, 31, 34, 35
T34S, R5W, Sec. 1, 3, 9, 11, 15, 20, 21
T33S, R6W, Sec. 10, 13L 19, 27, 33, 34, 35
T34S, R6W, Sec. 1, 3, 7, 19 T33S, R7W, Sec. 7, 9, 13, 15, 17, 21, 25, 29, 33, 34
T34S, R7W, Sec. 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 11, 13, 15

The following critical elements identified in the BLM handbook will not be adversely affected by this project and have been analyzed in the EA: air quality, areas of critical environmental concern, historical or cultural resources, prime or unique farmlands, floodplains, Native American religious sites, invasive species, energy, threatened or endangered species, known hazardous waste areas, water quality, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, wilderness and environmental justice.

Surveys for Survey and Manage plant and animal species have been completed and appropriate protocol buffer measures will be applied. The effects on Threatened and Endangered Species and Special Status Species are described in the EA. The estimation of impacts was based on research, professional judgment and experience of the interdisciplinary team. This method of estimating effects to the environment reduces the uncertainties to a level which does not involve highly unknown or unique risks.

FONSI DETERMINATION

I have reviewed the environmental assessment, including the explanation and resolution of any potentially significant environmental impacts not previously identified, and I have also reviewed the comments received from the public concerning this proposal. I have determined that the Young Stand Management and Fuels Reduction Treatments within the Grave Creek Watershed will not have any significant impacts on the human environment beyond those already described in the *Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl*, approved April 13, 1994; the *Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan* for the Medford District, approved June 1995; and the *Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendments to the Survey and*

Manage, Protection Buffer, Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines, approved January 2001. Therefore a supplemental EIS is not required.

Lynda L. Boody

Lynda L. Boody
Glendale Resource Area Field Manager
Medford District, BLM

2/2/04

Date